

# Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

# Kentucky celebrates Deaf History Month

**Press Release Date:** Friday, March 14, 2014

**Contact Information:**

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 14, 2014)** — The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) encourages all Kentuckians to observe Deaf History Month March 13 – April 15 by celebrating the accomplishments of deaf or hard of hearing individuals in their communities.

This month KCDHH is recognizing the work of Gerry Gordon-Brown, an African-American woman with a profound hearing loss. Brown was a student at Kentucky State College at the time of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march on Frankfort in 1964. She was one of several thousand who marched in support of civil rights in the state. That day helped springboard Brown into a life of advocacy for minorities, including people with disabilities. For her dedication to the mission of promoting equal rights, Brown was inducted to the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in 2007.

“It was important then, as it is now, to put a face on the cause,” Brown said. “That’s what we did in Frankfort 50 years ago, and I’m proud to have been a part of it.”

Brown shared her experience at the march and her perspective of it as a deaf woman, as well as the evolution of civil rights for minorities and people with disabilities with a KCDHH panel. A captioned and ASL signed video of that conversation is available [here](#).

“We are proud to have leaders like Gerry Gordon-Brown in our state, working tirelessly in support of the Americans with Disabilities Act and civil rights, and we are equally proud of all individuals who have helped advance the cause of equal rights for the deaf and hard of hearing,” said Virginia L. Moore, KCDHH executive director. “KCDHH encourages all Kentuckians to reach out to their communities and learn more about the leaders in the deaf and hard of hearing community, like Gerry.”

Deaf History Month includes three seminal moments in American history for the deaf community – the March 13, 1988, Deaf President Now protest; the April 8, 1864, signing of the Gallaudet University charter by President Abraham Lincoln; and the April 15, 1817, establishment of American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Conn., as the first permanent public school for the deaf in the United States.

Each of these events represents significant advancements for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the United States. The establishment of the American School for the Deaf was the beginning of a long, proud tradition of schools for the deaf in this country, which continues to this day. Preservation of these schools is of paramount importance to the community.

Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., is a central icon within the community, representing the only university in the world that is solely for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. March 13 represents the day that the deaf community seized its fate during the Gallaudet University “Deaf President Now” movement when the school selected its first deaf president. It was the first time in history that an organized protest, which included members of the student body, had influenced the choice of a university president.

For more information on deaf culture and history, visit the KCDHH website, [www.kcdhh.org](http://www.kcdhh.org).